

## Twenty-five Energy-Saving Ideas

Using energy wisely can reduce consumption and save money on utility bills. Some things cost nothing and can save a lot. Here are some tips:

1. First and foremost, have your furnace and gas appliances serviced annually by a qualified contractor to ensure safety and maximum energy-efficiency. As you "tighten up" your home for energy-efficiency, you may even want to install a CO detector for added safety.
2. When buying a new heating system or appliance, compare energy-efficiency ratings and annual operating costs. A slightly higher initial cost for a high-efficiency unit could pay itself back in a very short time through energy savings and lower utility bills.
3. Put on your favorite sweater and set your thermostats between 65 and 68 degrees during the winter. For sleep hours, set the temperature at least 5 degrees lower and add a cozy blanket to your bed. When away from home for more than a few hours, set your thermostat at 58 degrees. (Warmer temperatures are recommended for homes with ill or elderly persons or infants).
4. \*\*Install a programmable thermostat and set it to accurately follow your schedule. If no one is home during the day, there's no need to keep your house toasty. Using a programmable thermostat, you can adjust the times you turn on the furnace or air-conditioner according to a pre-set schedule. Programmable thermostats can store and repeat multiple daily settings (six or more temperature settings a day) that you can manually override without affecting the rest of the daily or weekly program.
5. \*\*Adjust registers to keep specific rooms of your home at a desired temperature. Heat rises, so you may want to partially close upstairs registers.
6. Seal leaks around doors, windows and other openings, such as pipes or ducts, with caulking or weather-stripping. The amount of energy wasted through poorly insulated windows and doors in this country is about as much energy as we get from the Alaskan Pipeline each year.
7. If pipes or ducts run through unheated areas, insulate them.
8. \*\*Close vents and doors in unused rooms.
9. Use draperies, awnings, blinds or shutters on all windows to slow the loss of heat through the glass. In winter, keep window coverings open on sunny days to let the sun's warmth in and close them at night to insulate against cold, outside air. Use drapes, shutters, awnings, shade trees, glass with reflective film or solar screens to keep sunlight out in the summer.
10. Rearrange furniture by placing it against inside walls -- you're less likely to feel cool drafts if you're not sitting next to the outside walls.
11. Avoid blocking heating registers and air returns with furniture, draperies or carpet.
12. Consider storm or thermal windows and doors or double-paned glass. A less-expensive alternative is plastic sheeting, which can be temporarily fastened over doors and windows to retain heat or air conditioning.

13. Purchase some inexpensive, pre-cut insulation gaskets and seal out the cold air entering your home through electrical switches and outlet plates, particularly those on outside walls.
14. A dirty furnace filter can drive up the cost of heating your home. Change or clean filters in heating and cooling units twice a year.
15. Check to see if your attic, crawlspace and/or basement have recommended levels of insulation. Add insulation as needed.
16. A humidifier -- either on your furnace or as a separate unit -- can help control heating costs. You'll feel warmer in moist air, so you can set your thermostat lower.
17. Closets and cabinets on outside walls can leak a great deal of air, so make sure the doors fit snugly and keep them tightly closed.
18. If you have ceiling fans, make sure the mountings are snug and tight. Use clear caulking to seal any leaks. Even minor cracks around the base can let in lots of cold air.
19. Use kitchen, bath and other ventilating fans sparingly in cold weather. In just one hour, these fans can blow away a household of warm air.
20. Set water heater temperature at 120 degrees and install water-flow restrictors in showerheads and faucets. Water-saving showerheads and faucet aerators save up to 50% on your water use. Simply unscrew the old one and screw on the new one.
21. Drain sediment from the water heater tank at least annually. Turn the temperature control to "off". Attach a garden hose to the spout at the bottom of the tank and place the other end in a floor drain. Open the valve and drain the water. Removing sediment promotes proper heat exchange and extends the life of the water heater. Check your water heater manual before draining.
22. Repair leaky faucets promptly. A leaky faucet wastes gallons of water in a short period of time.
23. Be sure that dishwashers, washing machines and clothes dryers are fully loaded before running.
24. You may not realize that your fireplace is one of the most inefficient heat sources you can possibly use. It literally sends your energy dollars right up the chimney -- along with volumes of warm air. A roaring fire can exhaust as much as 24,000 cubic feet of air per hour to the outside. The warm air is replaced by cold air coming into the house from the outside. Your heating system then works overtime to warm up this air -- which is then exhausted through your chimney. Keep your fireplace damper closed unless a fire is going. Keeping the damper open is like keeping a 48-inch window wide open during the winter since it allows warm air to go right up the chimney. *Don't use your gas fireplace or gas logs to try and heat your home. Use them for decorative purposes only. Don't use your gas range to heat your home either. Just use it for its intended purpose -- cooking.*
25. If you never use your fireplace, plug and seal the chimney flue.

*Energy-savings are based on information from the Department of Energy's web site at [www.doe.gov](http://www.doe.gov).*

*\*\*These actions can save you money with a gas furnace but may drive your energy bills higher with an electric heat pump.*